

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-7 (canceled).

Claim 8 (currently amended): A method for the continuous production of polyamide, starting with a material comprised of a salt of hexamethylenediamine with adipic acid (AH salt) and water which together form a prepolymer, the method comprising:

in a first stage wherein above atmospheric pressure is applied, heating the starting material, in a first reactor having a first gas space wherein the first gas space is [,] at a temperature[s] between 180°C and 280°C producing the prepolymer and evaporated water to the starting material, and;

after passing the starting material through the first stage, feeding the prepolymer and the evaporated water obtained due to said passage through said first stage to at least one further stage comprising a second reactor having a second gas space; and

removing or expelling the evaporated water from said second gas space; the improvement comprising, wherein connecting said first gas space is connected with pressure control to said second gas space, such that water evaporated into the first gas space of the first stage, with reaction components contained therein, is passed into the at least one further stage and a temperature of said evaporated water is reduced by said pressure control, said evaporated water being expelled only from the said second gas space of the at least one further stage in a reflux column at the at least one further stage at a temperature of the reflux column at less than 120°C measured at the upper end of the reflux column.

Claim 9 (canceled)

Claim 10 (previously presented): The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein an amount of AH-salt of up to 30% or from 80 to 100% is used.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method as claimed in claim 9, further comprising ~~expelling the water in the reflux column at the at least one further stage at a temperature of less than 120°C measured at the upper end of the reflux column~~, separating off caprolactam and diamine fractions from the water in the reflux column and recycling said fractions to the at least one further stage of the method.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A method for the continuous production of copolyamide, starting with a material comprised of a salt of hexamethylenediamine with adipic acid (AH salt), of water and of lactam, which form a prepolymer, the method comprising:

in a first stage wherein above atmospheric pressure is applied, heating the starting material, in a first reactor having a first gas space wherein the first gas space is [,] at a temperature[s] between 180°C and 280°C producing the prepolymer and evaporated water to the starting material, and;

after passing the starting material through the first stage, feeding the prepolymer and the evaporated water obtained due to said passage through said first stage to at least one further stage comprising a second reactor having a second gas space; and

removing or expelling the evaporated water from said second gas space; ~~the improvement comprising, wherein connecting~~ said first gas space is connected with pressure control to said second gas space, such that the water evaporated into the first gas space of the first stage, with the reaction components contained therein, is passed into the at least one further stage and a temperature of said evaporated water is reduced by said pressure control, said evaporated water being expelled only from the said second gas space of the at least one further stage in a reflux column at the at least one further stage at a temperature of the reflux column at less than 120°C measured at the upper end of the reflux column.

Claim 13 (canceled)

Claim 14 (previously presented): The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the starting material has a concentration of AH-salt of no more than 30%.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The method of claim 12, wherein the starting material has a concentration of AH-salt of from 80 to 100.

Claim 16 (currently amended): The method as claimed in claim 12, further comprising ~~expelling the water in a reflux column at a temperature of less than 120°C measured at the upper end of~~

~~the reflux column~~, separating off caprolactam and diamine fractions in the reflux column and recycling the fractions to the at least one further stage of the method.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the water is expelled by inert gas.